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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT OBAMA'S APPOINTMENT OF CHARLES FREEMAN

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage March 6 on the Ministry of Economic Affairs' plan to salvage Taiwan's DRAM industry; on Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's work report in China's National People's Congress (NPC); and on the situation of the local economy. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" commented on Washington's announcement last week of Charles W. Freeman, Jr., to be the Chairman of the United States National Intelligence Council. The editorial disagreed with widespread criticism of Freeman's suitability for the position. Instead, the editorial said by having Freeman, a fluent Mandarin Chinese speaker familiar with Taiwan and China, cross-Strait issues will not be "put on the back burner" when the United States is preoccupied with many other issues. End summary.

"Freeman A Good Choice"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (3/6):

"Last week, Washington announced that veteran U.S. diplomat Charles W. Freeman, Jr., was chosen to become the next chairman of U.S. President Barack Obama's National Intelligence Council. The appointment, made by Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair, has prompted widespread criticism because of Freeman's vast contacts with foreign governments. Known by his nickname 'Chas,' Freeman has formerly served as U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia and special envoy to Beijing. ...

"Freeman's appointment is controversial, because he will gain access to the most sensitive intelligence secrets. ...

"Many people in Taiwan remember Freeman because he served a stint at the U.S. embassy in Taipei in the 1960s when he was working for the U.S. Foreign Service, and headed the Republic of China Desk at the U.S. State Department in the 1970s before diplomatic relations were cut. ...

"Freeman is a fluent speaker of Mandarin Chinese and served as Richard Nixon's personal translator during the former U.S. president's history-making trip to mainland China in 1972. At times, Freeman has expressed views sharply critical of our government, such as when he blamed Taiwan for causing much of the tension in the Taiwan Strait. ...

"In practice, Freeman will just be coordinating between different government agencies in hopes of improving the quality of intelligence presented to President Obama. In the end, it will be President Obama, and not Freeman, who makes important decisions about what actions to take based upon this intelligence. We are pleased to see someone like Freeman, who speaks Chinese and is highly familiar with this region, serving in such an important post.

This means that while Washington remains preoccupied with its war against terrorism, Iraq and Afghanistan, events in this region will

not be put on the back burner. . . ."

YOUNG